

MERCY MANIFESTED:

A

L E T T E R

FROM

THE REV. MR. R—H—, OF A—BY,
IN THE COUNTY OF L—R,

TO

A F R I E N D;

RELATING TO THE VERY REMARKABLE AFFLIC-
TIONS, TEMPTATIONS, AND DYING CONSOLA-
TIONS OF MRS. J—H—.

HE WILL TURN AGAIN. MICAH vii. 19.

WEEPING MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING. PSAL. xxxv. 5.

L O N D O N:

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M DCCLXXVII.

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MANUSCRIPT

LETTER

TO

THE

ROYAL



THE

LONDON

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A LETTER, &c.

DEAR SIR,

AS you have repeatedly requested me to give you an account of the remarkable afflictions, temptations, and dying consolations of my late dear wife; I have, at length, complied with your desire, and now send you the following narrative.

The dear deceased, it may be proper to observe, was naturally of a lively, cheerful disposition, and remarkably active in the management of her domestic affairs: and though, partly by a violent fever, about thirteen years ago, which deprived her of the regular use of reason for several weeks; and partly by bearing fourteen children, eight of whom she followed to the grave, her constitution was much impaired, yet the cheerfulness of her disposition continued. She was also frequently favoured with much of the Divine presence; in the enjoyment of which she was indulged, by a gracious God, for near twenty years, to a degree not experienced by many Christians.

In the beginning of March 1773, she often complained of great spiritual darkness, and laboured under many discouragements in her own

mind; and frequently said, ' she apprehended ' some heavy trial was coming upon us.' On the twenty-first of the same month, about one o'clock in the morning, we were awaked by an uncommon noise, and by the alarming cry of murder. The reason of which was, as we quickly found, a person had broken into the house of a very near neighbour, who lived alone; stole his property, and threatened his life; out of whose cruel hands he very narrowly escaped, by bursting through a window. This unexpected and dreadful alarm being immediately followed by a view of our injured neighbour, who, having wounded himself in making his escape, was in a bloody and shocking condition; affected my dear deceased to such a degree, that she could not sleep for near a fortnight; and ever after, when she did sleep, generally awoke about the same hour in a painful tremour. Upon this she concluded, that God was angry with her; that she had never known him savingly; and that all her former spiritual enjoyments were the delusions of a vain imagination.—From this time forward she took no delight in her family; and her domestic concerns, in which, before, she was remarkably diligent, became her aversion. Bodily disorders also came on, of such a nature, as greatly added to her former gloom and horror of mind; which being still much increased by violent and dreadful temptations from our common enemy, she was rendered as completely
miserable

miserable as, perhaps, any one in this world was ever known to be, who retained the exercise of reason. Nay, it was the opinion of many, that her affliction would have been much the lighter, had she been entirely deprived of the use of that noble faculty. On her behalf many fervent prayers were offered up to God, and the aids of medicine were sought in various ways: notwithstanding which, her affliction increased in every view; especially as to the horror of her mind, and the violence of almost every kind of dreadful temptations.

For some time she retained honourable thoughts of God and his law, of his people and appointments; and often said, 'God is righteous; and his law is holy, just, and good, whatever be come of me:' but, for the last year of her life, she seemed to give way to the most horrid suggestions and blasphemous conclusions, that Satan himself could inspire. She had, indeed, in the midst of her deep distress, various very consolatory portions of Scripture impressed on her mind; particularly the following; "For a small moment have I hid my face from thee, " But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer—The vision is yet for an appointed time; but, at the end, it will speak and not lye. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry—At evening time it shall be light—The days of thy mourning shall

"be ended." The last of these passages, she often said, ran almost perpetually in her mind; but she could take no comfort from it: nor did any of them afford her the least gleam of cheering hope. She was, indeed, so far influenced by them, as at some particular times to say; 'The Lord *can* save me, if he will:' but this was the utmost effect they had on her mind. The painful apprehension of perishing for ever, had the ascendancy to such a degree, that, in August last, my watch happening to hang in her chamber, she took it in her hand, and said; 'I need not regard time: I have done with counting time: I am entered on an eternal state of suffering:' and, throwing the watch with vehemence on the floor, added, 'I am as surely damned as that watch is broken!' The watch, however, not receiving the least injury, she was amazed, and said, with tears; 'Well, if God save me, all heaven will be astonished; but none will wonder so much at his unparalleled mercy, as myself!'—But even this had no abiding effect; for, in a few weeks, she was in as great an agony of mental distress as ever. She took the watch a second time, (concluding that she did not, before, throw it with sufficient force) and, saying the same words, flung it with all her might across the room. But still the watch received not the least harm, which was quite astonishing! and the more so to me, as the enamel was cracked by an accidental fall some years before. But
neither

neither the enamel, nor the case, nor the glass, nor any part of it, received the least apparent injury from these repeated acts of violence. I was not, indeed, an eye-witness of these astonishing facts; but she, with many tears, informed me of them: which determined me to take care of the watch, lest she should be tempted again to repeat the unwarrantable and presumptuous experiment.

She was, for a considerable time, under strong temptations to put an end to her life; imagining that the longer she lived in this world, the more intolerable would her condition be in the next. And, though a watchful eye was kept upon her, by my whole family, she found several opportunities in which, had not a gracious Providence prevented, she might have accomplished her awful design. One time, having such an opportunity, she thought, before she executed the rash resolve, that she would kneel down and pray, 'That she might not, in the infernal world, be 'a blasphemer:' when God was pleased to frustrate the designs of the tempter, and she arose from her knees with a, "Who can tell?" At another time, being Lord's day, and the hour of public worship, two persons being at home with strict orders to take the utmost care of her; one of them happening to step into an adjoining chamber, and the other going down the stairs to do something about the fire, she went out of the house entirely unperceived by either of them. Soon after, and just before I returned from the

worship of God, she came in, to their great surprise, all over wet. Seeing her in such a condition, a sense of her imminent danger and great deliverance, almost overcame us all. Con-
 versing with her on the alarming incident, I found, that she had flung herself into a pit full of water, which was in a field contiguous to my garden; a pit, which was in general five feet deep, but still deeper on that side of it where she threw herself in, and the descent almost perpendicular. How she got out again she could not tell; but she said, that ‘while in the water, these words sounded in her ears and impressed her mind, DELIVER MY SOUL FROM GOING DOWN TO THE PIT; on which she was delivered she knew not how.’

Passing by many remarkable instances of Divine protection, during her deep distress and horrid temptations, in the course of three years and nine months; I shall now give you a concise account of the Lord’s appearance for her near the close of life. In December last, being wasted almost to a skeleton, she had all the symptoms of a nearly approaching dissolution upon her; nor was her mind in the least relieved from the temptations of the Devil, or the horrors of despair. On the 17th of that month, early in the morning, we considered her as in the very article of dissolution. But, reviving a little, I asked her, How she was in her mind? She answered, ‘Worse and worse! The pains and horrors of hell—’

‘ hell have got hold upon me! I am a damned creature!’—with other expressions of a similar kind.—She being exceedingly weak, I requested, if the Lord should appear for her, so as to afford her any hope, that she would give us a signal of it. She replied; ‘ Yes, when he does: but that will never be! no, never! never! never!’—The next day she appeared to be more calm, but said little: her strength seemed to be almost entirely exhausted. In the evening of the same day, my distress, on her account, was inexpressibly great. I retired, as I had often done, in order to pour out my prayers to God for her; and found such liberty and fervour in addressing the Lord, as I do not remember I ever before enjoyed. I felt a submission to the will of God, in reference to *our* having any evidence of his appearance for her; concluding, that it might, possibly, be better for *us* to be ignorant of it; and that mercy might be manifested to *her*, was all for which I was anxious.

After meditating on her very affecting situation, and thinking, with many tears, on these lines of Dr. Watts,

‘ How would the powers of darkness boast,
‘ If but one praying soul were lost!’

I went into her apartment to pray with her, and I asked her how she did? With a serene countenance and a cheerful smile, she said, ‘ I am

' am well now, my dear. My burden is quite
 ' removed: it is gone, like a stone, from my
 ' heart. My sweet JESUS is come! is come!
 ' is come! Yes, my dear, he is come! He is
 ' come of himself, and himself is come! He is
 ' come of his own accord! I did not fetch him.
 ' I could not, I durst not pray. I did not ex-
 ' pect ever to have enjoyed his presence. I verily
 ' thought I should never see his face, with com-
 ' fort: but O, wonderful grace! my JESUS is come!
 ' He is come! He is come! He is come to me,
 ' and-bids me come to him! He says, come unto
 ' me, ye heavy-laden.'—Her strength being quite
 exhausted, she paused a while, as she had before
 repeatedly done; for it was with difficulty that
 she uttered her words. Recovering herself a
 little, she added, ' PRECIOUS JESUS! Yes, my
 ' dear, he is PRECIOUS to them that believe. He
 ' used to be precious to me, but never *so* precious
 ' as now. O, how I love him! I love him! I
 ' love him!'—which words, I LOVE HIM, she
 repeated till she was quite spent.

After a while she said, ' My dear husband, you
 ' and I have had a long time of trouble; we
 ' have sorrowed together; but now we'll praise,
 ' praise, praise! O, help me to praise and bless
 ' his holy name! I am so weak I cannot praise
 ' him now; but I shall soon be free from this
 ' poor body, and then I will praise him for ever.
 ' I shall meet, in heaven, with my eight chil-
 ' dren, that are gone; and my dear husband,
 ' with

‘ with my six dear children that remain [here she distinctly mentioned the name of each surviving child] ‘ will, I believe, through rich
‘ grace, be brought to the heavenly world. Then
‘ you’ll magnify the Lord with me! O, then we
‘ will exalt his name together!’

I asked her, when the Lord began to dispel her darkness and comfort her soul? She answered,
‘ Early this morning, I could hardly forbear
‘ singing, *Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,*
‘ &c. † but I suppressed my joy; for I thought I
‘ had been such a poor sinful creature, that I would
‘ say nothing to any body. But I could not for-
‘ bear any longer. The Lord told me, the vision
‘ was for an appointed time—that at evening
‘ time it should be light—and, that the days of
‘ my mourning should be ended. Many hun-
‘ dred times did these passages run in my mind;
‘ yet I could not, I would not believe. But now
‘ the days of my mourning are ended.’ Here,
checking herself, she added; ‘ I should not say
‘ so. I am yet in the body. I know not how
‘ it may be with me: but I believe the days of
‘ my mourning shall *soon* be ended. What horrid
‘ thoughts have I had of the great and good
‘ God! Satan tempted me to commit blasphemy:
‘ yea, to curse God, and all his people. But now
‘ I can say, that I love God; I love his ways;
‘ I love his people. I love my husband and chil-

† Mr. HART’s Hymns, No. 100.

‘dren better than ever I did: nay, I love every body now; but MY God I love above all. I shall soon be with him, and sing, VICTORY, VICTORY, through the blood of the Lamb! O, precious blood! Divine blood! it cleanseth from all sin.’

Asking her, whether she would take any thing? she replied, ‘No; I want nothing, now I have my JESUS. I intreat you to go to bed. I need nobody with me now, for my JESUS is come; and he says, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*’—After prayer and praise, knowing that I had been much interrupted in the enjoyment of my natural rest, and fearing that I should take cold by waking with her; she was very urgent upon me to go to bed. To satisfy her, I did so, but could not sleep for joy. I soon arose, to inquire how she did. Which question being asked, she answered, ‘Very well. My Lord is with me: but am so weak that I cannot converse.’

The next morning a Christian friend came in, as usual, to inquire how she did. I informed her, that such an one was below. ‘Tell him,’ said she, ‘to come up.’ He did so. On seeing him, she took him by the hand, and said, ‘My dear friend, rejoice with me. My JESUS is come! I am comfortable now. Tell sister Alice [meaning his wife] ‘to come and see me; and let us all rejoice once more together.’—Many Christian friends visited her that day; each of whom

whom was filled with a joyful surprise, and affected in a manner which exceeds description. When speaking to them, she frequently said, 'O, how I love the people of God! I love you all, as I do my own soul. Pray that I may have still more faith and patience. I am weak and wicked. But this God is my God, for ever and ever; and will be my guide even unto death.'—To her children, then around her, she said, 'You have been good children to me. You have behaved tenderly and well to me, in all my troubles. The Lord bless you yet more and more! He has begun a good work in you, and he will finish it. He is a faithful God: trust in him, and cleave to him. Regard the advice of your dear father, who, with you, has had much trouble with me. Though I am very weak, I feel but little pain. The Lord, perhaps, may raise me up again, to be a comfort to you, and a monument of his own mercy and faithfulness, that others may be encouraged to trust in him: for none need despair, seeing I have found mercy.'

The following night she said very little: she often endeavoured to speak, but could not; being so weak as frequently to faint away.—The next morning, she appeared as if she was just going to expire: but, being a little revived, said, 'They overcame him through the blood of the Lamb.' And, looking at me, added, 'My dear, let us again once more magnify the Lord
{ together.'

‘together.’—After united addresses at the Divine throne, she said, with a feeble voice, ‘God is good: he has been good indeed to me; even to poor, sinful me—A faithful, covenant-keeping God—He will be found of all his people—Not one of his shall ever be lost—Jesus is able to save to the very uttermost.’

That day she complained of being very sleepy and dull, and repeatedly said; ‘I fear Satan seeks to gain an advantage over me. What a poor sluggish creature I am, to sleep now, when I should watch, and pray, and praise!’—In the evening she had a fine sleep. Awaking, she said, ‘Blessed be God! I have had a sweet sleep indeed! I have not had the like for several years.’ She would fain have conversed, but her extreme weakness prevented her saying much.—Soon after, she intimated, that her mind was a little beclouded; and said, ‘I know not how it will be with me at last.’ She seemed to be much troubled in spirit; frequently, in a most affecting manner, saying, ‘What shall I do! what shall I do!’ adding, ‘Though He slay me, I will trust in him.’—Two of our children, who were at a distance, being sent for, and coming home about ten o’clock in the evening, she spake very affectionately to them, commending them to the Lord; but, not being able to express more than a word or two at a time, without painful interruptions, she did not say much. Yet, with elevated looks and fixed eyes,
she

she repeatedly said, with a feeble voice; ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?’

The scene being now too affecting for me, I let go her hands; which, at her request, had been closed in mine for several hours. Seating myself on the other side of the chamber, she waved her hand towards me and seemed uneasy. I returned to her, and, eagerly taking hold of my hand, she smiled, saying; ‘Mercy!—mercy!’ —Sweet—Jesus—Mighty—to—save!—Found ‘in him—living—dying—judgment’—and thus breathed her last, about five o’clock on Saturday morning, December 21, 1776.

The above is a very concise account of the dealings of a Sovereign God with my dear deceased wife; and of the rich, free, triumphant grace, that was manifested to her: all who beheld her complicated afflictions, and attended her in the concluding period of life, being ready to adopt the words of the astonished Jews, as reported by the evangelist, and say; “We never saw things on this fashion!”—That this narrative may be useful to my worthy friend, at whose request it was drawn up; and, if ever made public, edifying to all that shall read it; is the sincere prayer of,

Dear Sir,

your unworthy brother,

in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

A—by,
April 12, 1777.

R—H—.

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